

## THE CLAIMS

- 1) (amended) An apparatus for efficiently storing items for retrieval and distribution so as to reduce storage space and increase retrieval efficiency comprising:
  - a. A plurality of uniformly shaped containers adapted to be used for storage of items wherein the containers are generally rectangular in a horizontal cross-section and comprise a front wall, a back wall and two side walls, and are generally rectangular in a vertical cross-section and comprise an opening in the top of the container through which the items will be placed into the container and an opening in the bottom of the container through which the items will be removed after being dispensed through the container by gravity; and
  - b. A plurality of racks on which the plurality of containers will be aligned in a uniform fashion so as to minimize the area required to contain the plurality of containers on the plurality of racks.
- 4) (amended) A method for efficiently storing items for retrieval and distribution so as to reduce storage space and increase retrieval efficiency comprising the steps of:
  - a. Providing a plurality of uniformly shaped containers adapted to be used for storage of items wherein the containers are generally rectangular in a horizontal cross-section and comprise a front wall, a back wall, and two side walls, and are generally rectangular in a vertical cross-section and comprise an opening in the top of the

- container through which the items will be placed into the container
- through which the items will be removed after being dispensed
- through the container by gravity;
- b. Providing a plurality of racks on which the plurality of containers will be aligned in a uniform fashion; and
- c. Arranging the plurality of containers on the plurality of racks so as to minimize the area required to contain the plurality of containers on the plurality of racks.

7) (amended) An efficient method for fulfilling customer orders for stored items in a mail order warehouse comprising the steps of:

- a. Providing a plurality of uniformly shaped containers adapted to be used for storage of items wherein the containers are generally rectangular in a horizontal cross-section and comprise a front wall, a back wall, and two side walls and are generally rectangular in a vertical cross-section and comprise an opening in the top of the container through which the items will be placed into the container and an opening in the bottom of the container through which the items will be removed after being dispensed through the container by gravity;
- b. Providing a plurality of racks on which the plurality of containers will be aligned in a uniform fashion so as to minimize the area required to contain the plurality of containers on the plurality of racks; and
- c. Arranging the plurality of containers on the plurality of racks to minimize the distance between the plurality of containers so as to

decrease the time it takes for a person to locate stored items to fulfill customer orders.

- 8) (amended) A method for efficiently storing items in a retail store for display and dispensing to customers so as to reduce storage space and increase accessibility for the customers comprising the steps of:
  - a. Providing a plurality of uniformly shaped containers adapted to be used for storage of items wherein the containers are generally rectangular in a horizontal cross-section and comprise a front wall, a back wall and two side walls, and are generally rectangular in a vertical cross-section and comprise an opening in the top of the container through which the items will be placed into the container and an opening in the bottom of the container through which the items will be removed after being dispensed through the container by gravity;
  - b. Providing a plurality of racks on which the plurality of containers will be aligned in a uniform fashion; and
  - c. Arranging the plurality of containers on the plurality of racks so as to minimize the area required to contain the plurality of containers on the plurality of racks.